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in Number of Animals Used in UK Medical Research Rare



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## Rise in Number of Animals Used in UK Medical Research

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UK: July 25, 2006

**LONDON - Animals were used in 2.9 million medical experiments in Britain in 2005, an increase of 1.4 percent from the previous year, the government said on Monday.**

Most of the animals involved were mice, rats and other rodents. Less than half of one percent of the procedures included dogs, cats, horses or non-human primates, according to the figures released by the Home Office.

"The UK has a reputation for producing high quality, well-regarded research and I welcome the fact that this is being carried out under some of the highest standards of welfare and accommodation in the world," Home Office minister Joan Ryan said in a statement.

"Animal research and testing has played a part in almost every medical breakthrough of the last century," she added.

Between 1974 and 1996 the number of procedures requiring animals fell year on year. But since 2000 there has been an annual rise of 1-2 percent.

The increase is due mainly to the breeding of genetically modified animals which were included in the figures. By turning off or inserting genes in animals scientists hope to improve understanding of human diseases and to develop new treatments.

"The overall figure might seem large but the number of animals put through severe procedures is very small," Professor John Martin, of the Centre for Vascular Biology and Medicine and the British Heart Foundation, told a press conference.

Drug companies say animals are a vital part of the research and development of new medicines and vaccines.

But animals rights groups who have fought a prolonged -- and sometimes violent -- campaign

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against animal research, said the latest figures represent a 14-year high.

"The government claims that animal experiments are suitably monitored and regulated, but this is a claim made without evidence," said Poorva Joshipura, the European Director of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

Britain set up the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research in 2004. In addition to improving standards of welfare it also studies alternatives to animal testing such as computer modelling and cultured cells grown in test tubes.

REUTERS NEWS SERVICE



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